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Section 101(a)(1) MSA 1951, Escapees

Escapee Program

The Escapee Program had its inception under the authority of the Kersten Amendment (Section 101(a)(1)) of the Mutual Security Act of 1951. On March 22, 1952, the President approved the use of funds for this plan which provided for supplemental care and assistance in resettlement for certain escapees from behind the Iron Curtain who had been granted asylum in Western Europe and this decision was communicated to the Chairmen of the appropriate committees of the Congress. The Office of the Director for Mutual Security authorized a total of \$4.3 millions in appropriated dollars and approximately \$2.0 million in local currency for this purpose. This authorization has since been reduced by \$700,000 to comply with the President's economy program as outlined in the Budget Bureau letter of February 3, 1953.

In approximately one year of operation, the program has achieved substantial results at a minimum cost to the Government. Activities are being carried on in each of the major countries of first asylum benefiting an estimated 14,000 escapees. Improved facilities of initial reception have been provided, and camps and living conditions are being improved. Food and clothing are being furnished to supplement that provided by the local governments and by voluntary agencies. Medical and dental services are available to improve the health of escapees and to remove disabilities which prevent resettlement. Miscellaneous small amenities are provided to raise the morale of the escapees who have fled from demoralizing conditions and who face an uncertain future.

Major attention is devoted to assisting escapees to resettle in countries where they can achieve self-dependence and live under normal conditions in a free society. To this end vocational and language training programs are undertaken to qualify the escapees for resettlement and counselling and visa documentation programs are provided to further process escapees for resettlement. All escapees are screened from a security standpoint in cooperation with other U.S. agencies to assure that all persons given assistance are bona fide anti-communists and are otherwise worthy of U.S. help. Any person who does not successfully pass the security screening is declared ineligible for aid under the program. The program also contributes a part of the cost of moving escapees to

their countries

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 2 -

their countries of resettlement. As a result of these efforts, at the end of April 1953, over 4000 persons had been resettled or were awaiting transportation. U.S. assistance in these activities is essential, because, although the local governments spend large amounts in bearing the major cost of caring for escapees the governments have not been able to provide the level of assistance necessary to meet the political and psychological problems involved. U.S. participation has also been greatly supplemented by the efforts of the several American and international voluntary agencies which carry out most of the U.S. program through contractual arrangements and which already have large staffs devoted to refugee and escapee assistance. Thus, with relatively small U.S. government staffs, the program has directly brought about a marked improvement in the conditions of asylum and opportunities for resettlement offered escapees and has also stimulated increased contributions to the welfare of this group by local government authorities and by the voluntary agencies.

These benefits to those who have escaped do not and are not designed to encourage additional persons to flee from behind the Iron Curtain. However, the Escapee Program does give positive evidence of the announced friendship and concern of the United States for the people of Communist-dominated countries and offsets Soviet propaganda efforts to the contrary.

The Escapee Program proposes for FY 1954 (1) to continue and in some respects expand the present European Program; (2) to initiate limited programs in the Near and Far East to meet needs not now being met. The total obligational authority required is \$10,500,000, which includes local currency requirements and program direction costs. Of this total \$2,500,000 worth of local currencies can be utilized.

Proposed Activities in Europe

Continuation of the present program in Europe is essential to maintain and enlarge the progress which has been made. It is planned to continue the same general type of operation now being carried on, but to expand somewhat eligibility under the program. At present eligibility is granted to recently arrived nationals of Russia, the Baltic states, Poland, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, and Bulgaria but is withheld from certain groups such as the Greek ethnic escapees from Roumania. In FY 1954 it is proposed to expand this eligibility to certain other groups whom it would be in the national interest to assist.

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UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

- 3 -

Proposed Activities in the Near and Far East

It is proposed to extend the activities of the Escapee Program on a limited basis to assist anti-Communist escapees from Soviet Central Asia and Mainland China. During a period when substantial sums were being applied to the care and resettlement of refugees in Europe, little attention has been given to similar problems of displaced populations in the Far East. This neglect is equally true in the case of escapees from Communism. In recognition of the vast proportions of the problem in these areas, and consistent with the agreed purposes of the Escapee Program, it is planned to limit assistance to groups or individuals where such assistance will facilitate the achievement of U.S. objectives. Two modest projects have been initiated in this area in the current fiscal year under the authority of Section 303(a) of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949, as amended. It is proposed to undertake a larger program in 1954, which however will be only a token effort in terms of the vast size of the total problem in the Far East.

The cost of this program to the United States is relatively small when related to the importance of the foreign policy issues involved. The Escapee Program is fundamental to such basic U.S. objectives in Europe as the promotion of the over-all defense and stability of free Europe and the securing for the free world the friendship of the enslaved populations behind the Iron Curtain. These objectives are a distinct and recognized threat to the Soviet efforts to bring about conditions in the free European countries conducive to political tension and disintegration and to shut off the captive populations from all knowledge of or friendship with the free world. The success of the Escapee Program in furthering the U.S. objectives is demonstrated by the persistent efforts of the Soviet and satellite powers to discredit the program.

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